

## DRIVING A FOUR-IN-HAND.

TO LEARN IT WELL A DIFFICULT TASK.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOLDING THE REINS, MOUNTING, ROUNDING CORNERS AND STOPPING THE TEAM—LONG PRACTICE UNDER A COMPETENT TEACHER THE BEST METHOD.

The man who imagines he can learn to drive really well in a short time is mistaken, but, if possible, he is likely to find out his error in time. Of driving it can be truthfully said that the more a man knows the more he knows that he knows comparatively little, and in many cases nothing. When the beginner gets into this last and most desirable state of mind he is extremely tractable and in a fair way to become sooner or later an ornament to the box of any vehicle upon which he may chance to sit.

There can be no question that four horses need a "deal of driving," in fact, about four times as much as one horse. It requires no great amount of discernment on the part of the beginner to see for the same reason that, as he crept before he walked, he should drive a single horse and then a pair before attempting four-in-hand work. But if the beginner has driven a single horse and a pair until it has become rather monotonous, and has ordered and paid for or not paid for a drag, coaching horses, harness and so forth, one of the first things he will do to make himself familiar with the construction of the harness and drag down to the smallest details. It will be a good and economical thing if he can get some of this kind of knowledge before signing checks for the coach-builder and harness-maker, but in many instances this is quite impossible, even if natural impatience did not stand in the way.



Figure No. 1—THE POSITION ON THE BOX.

With this knowledge of the coach, and of the harness and how it should go on, the driver, before starting, should walk around his horses and see that everything is right. Then he should take his position on the box. The position of the driver of a four-horse drag is more important than that of the driver of any other kind of vehicle. It is often necessary on a moment's warning to exert great strength, for instance, to prevent a team's bolting. If the driver is standing against one of the ultra-sloping driving cushions, a runaway will be found impossible.

## THE PLACE FOR THE WHIP.

Some drivers before mounting have their whips put across the backs of the wheels, but most of those with some judgment think that the whip is safest and best in its socket before the start. It is an awkward undertaking to mount the box, whip in hand, and no end of accidents have been caused by bad management in trying this needless performance. By far the simplest and safest way of mounting is as follows: Stand by the side of the off-wheeler and take the reins in the left hand, taking them from the backs of the wheels, where, tucked in just in front of the buckle of the off-wheeler's pad, grooms that understand their business will have placed them. Hold them as for driving, as shown in Figure No. 2, and draw them all until you feel the mouths of the horses. Then with the right hand pull the two off-reins out of the left hand, so that they are looser and longer than the near-reins by a foot or perhaps a trifle more. Then keeping their relative lengths the same, pass them to the right hand and climb to the seat quickly with the assistance of the left hand. When seated pass them back to the left, when the difference in length will be seen to have disappeared, and if any shifting, lengthening or shortening is needed, it will be, if the mounting has been properly done, not more than an inch either way. Take the whip in hand ready for the start, and the position of the hands will be that shown in Figure No. 2.

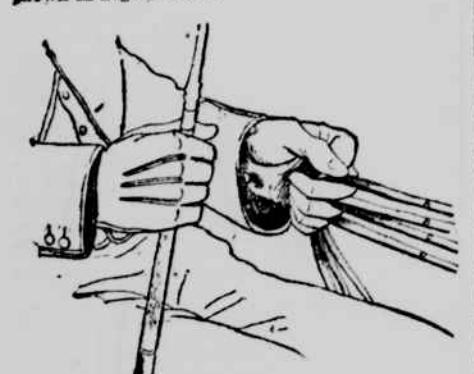


Figure No. 2—ABOUT TO START.

It may be accepted as necessary for the comfort of all coachmen that a team should never start until told. This end may be and often is difficult to attain, but the driver can rest assured that he will never have any peace of mind before getting well under way until it is. For the start as well as throughout the drive, the reins must be at such a length that it is possible to pull up at any moment. The aprons should be properly adjusted and there should be no rugs to be snatched off in a hurry at the last moment.

"Come, now!" or "Now we're off!" are good starting commands, and the Americanian one hears upon the front platforms of New-York surface cars should be carefully avoided, particularly the one which resembles the ante-popping chirp of the champagne cork. If the start is made with the reins held as they were on mounting, the near-wheeler's rein being anything but shorter than that of the off-wheeler's, it is probable that no essential changes will have to be made. If the leaders are straying a trifle from the straight way, hanging somewhat to the near side, say, by shortening the off-leader's rein or by pushing back with the right hand the off-leader's and near-wheeler's reins (B and C in Figure No. 2), the difficulty is at once and easily remedied.

## SHORTENING THE REINS.

In the shortening of single reins they should never be pulled back with the right hand from behind the left, but pushed back from in front. For doing this it is necessary to have moderately thick reins, and the much-discussed question how thick and how wide they shall be arises. Many coachmen, particularly those of the old school, maintain that reins should be an inch wide and tolerably thick, while others go in for those an inch and an eighth, an inch and a quarter, and even of greater width.

Those of medium width are by the most capable authorities considered best, and for the average driver an inch-and-a-quarter rein of moderate thickness is about right. The length of the coachman's fingers must, however, be taken into

consideration, and the size of the reins regulated by that. Those which could be held with comfort by a long-fingered man would prove uncomfortable in the extreme for a man with short, pudgy fingers. The coach should be started, if possible, with the wheels. A leader jumping away like a rocket may break a bar or pull the coach onto the quarters of the wheels, in which case a violent high-kicking exhibition or the throwing down of a horse is likely to be the result. A perfect team will start almost all together, the wheels just perceptibly before the leaders, and it should be the ambition of every coachman to have them get away thus.

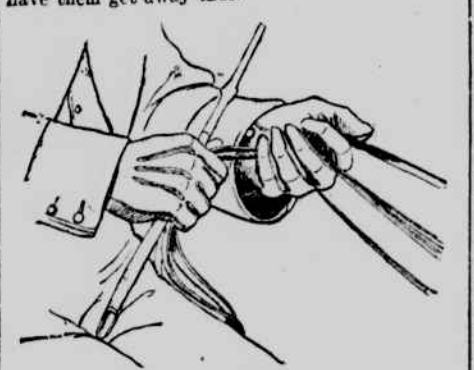


Figure No. 3—STOPPING.

Only for stopping, avoiding collisions, and in the case of all the horses taking a notion to bolt at once, it is permissible to pull all reins back through the left hand. Some of the best coachmen, however, pull back their wheel reins with the left hand in cases where the wheels are more free and impetuous than the leaders.

It is useless for a beginner to attempt to learn "looping," except under an able instructor and a short loop out of it and holding it beneath the thumb until a corner is turned or an obstruction rounded. The rein is then permitted to resume its former position. Giving the leaders an intimation that you are about to round a corner, or, as it is technically termed, "pointing your leaders," is accomplished, if the turn is sharp to the left, by looping the near-leader's rein and placing it securely beneath the thumb of the left hand. The leaders will then begin to bear to the left. Then the whip-hand should take the off-reins, both together, regulate the turning and insure its not being too abrupt.

When the drag is safely around the corner the whip hand is removed and the loop beneath the thumb permitted to run out, and then the team will be found as straight as ever. The off-leader's rein is much more difficult to loop, and the turn to the right is consequently a harder problem. If a complete circle is to be made the loop must, of course, be held all the way around, and if one drives in a track which is the shape of a figure 8 there is some lively changing of loops at the centre of the figure.

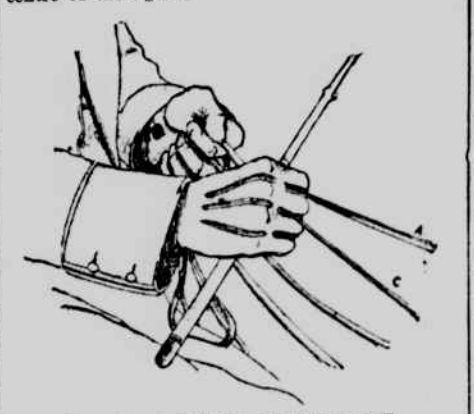


Figure No. 4—TURNING TO THE LEFT.

The turns shown in figures 4 and 5 are simpler than the looping, and the beginner would do well to use them at first and reserve the looping until he has had a considerable amount of practice. The first lessons at four-in-hand driving should be taught and should be carried on on a broad and level highway. For beginning, an old and well-trained team is the right thing, but the driver must bear in mind that he is not in reality a driver until he has become a coachman, and an expert to hold, turn and stop horses of various temperaments. When the level work has been practised the descending of hills and steep ways, with the aid of the reins, should be practised. There is no occasion to shorten the leaders' reins any more than those of the wheels when coming to a slight descent. All the reins should be taken in the whip-hand, the fingers of the left hand opened, and the reins pushed back through the necessary distance.

## USE OF THE BRAKE.

It is well to drive slowly over the tops of hills great or small. If the brake is used, and it should not be except when absolutely necessary, it should be put on gently and by the driver himself. How the wheels are to do their full work, when to put on the brake and when not to, what pace is safest under the circumstances, are questions that are only solved to the driver's satisfaction after years of practice. The brake used indiscriminately has made more wheelers utterly unfit for their work than the uninitiated will believe.



Figure No. 5—TURNING TO THE RIGHT.

One of the most important features of four-in-hand driving is the proper use and handling of the whip. Unless a man "catfoes" and handles this implement in the approved fashion, he will invariably be considered worth coaching men call a "duffer." To be a finished driver, he should in coaching pay of about to kick when the whip is held up, and set him down half a mile up the road.

The beginner should be sure that he has purchased a good whip in the first place, and that it is not badly balanced. It is a good plan to practice on the box of a coach without any horses for a time, and thus to get enough knowledge to appear conspicuously ridiculous on the road.

Catching the whip is a difficult trick and learning it is likely to test the driver's vocabulary of expletives. The catch in which the stick is thrown to the right front should be first mastered and afterward the catch over the head. With nervous wheelers the latter one, which is the more difficult, is considered the best. When the whip is not in use it should be carried with the hand about at top level, the thumb pointing somewhat upward, and at the same time holding the end of the whip, which should wind around the stick three or four times about two inches below its top.

The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheelers should always be hit in front of their pads and preferably on the point of the near or off shoulder, and never over the head. The action of catching the whip can best be described as making a letter S in the air with the stick, followed by the "hook," but that description is by no means good. Practice is the only way by which the knack can be acquired. The wheel